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THE ALLURING FACET OF *CEAUȘESCUISM*: NATION-BUILDING AND IDENTITY POLITICS IN COMMUNIST ROMANIA, 1965-1989

“Man is a complex animal who is tractable in some respects and intractable in others. Both the successes and the failures of our communist cases suggest that there is a pattern to this tractability-intractability behavior, that liberty once experienced is not quickly forgotten, and that equity and equality of some kind resonate in the human spirit.” This is how Gabriel Almond concludes his study on communist political cultures that focuses on the former Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, as well as Cuba, Hungary and Poland.¹ It can be argued that, apart from liberty, equity and equality, the notions of *social integration*, *economic improvement* and *national cohesion*, also resonated in the spirit of the peoples ruled by communist regimes. As far as Romania is concerned, this author believes that any comprehensive analysis designed to explain the way in which the regime began co-opting large strata of the population as of the early 1960s must address two issues of paramount significance: *modernization* and *nation-building*. In terms of (communist) modernization, during the 1960s and 1970s the regime had something to offer to Romania’s population at large. Quality of life, for the majority of the population, improved unquestionably. Things changed fundamentally during the 1980s, however, when a severe economic crisis struck, generated by the regime’s inflexible policies. Consequently, it was both the relative and the absolute deprivation suffered by the overwhelming majority of the population that made the 1989 revolution possible.

A number of questions remain, however: what hampered the development of societal opposition towards a regime that was not only brought to power by a foreign (super)power – the Soviet Union – but was also based on an ideology that had no local tradition whatsoever?² Also, after the period of Stalinist terror came to an end and, more importantly,

the withdrawal of Soviet troops was accomplished in the summer of 1958, what was it that created a focus of identification with the regime? Answering these questions is by no means easy. This paper argues that an answer can be found in the continuation of the nation-building process under communism. This process, which had entered its final stages by the early 1980s, eventuated in a cultural syndrome that can be called *the late creation of the nation*. This syndrome made a major contribution to hampering any gradual development of societal opposition towards the regime and determined in many respects the atypical, bloody nature of the 1989 Romanian revolution.

As Walker Connor has aptly demonstrated, the question as to *when* a nation is created still sparks heated debate among scholars and lay people alike. In Romania, the process of creating the nation did not end in 1918, as a majority of Romanian scholars argue. It should be noted from the outset that few intellectuals under communism focused seriously on the issue of the formation of Romanian national identity. In most cases, strong emphasis was placed on the ancient roots of the Romanian people. And it is for this reason, simultaneously with the resurgence of autochthonism in the aftermath of the July 1971 “theses”, that references to the Thracians, Geto-Dacians and Dacian-Romans became almost obligatory elements in any discourse on the formation of the Romanian nation. Autochthonist historical discourses were mainly produced by historians associated with the Romanian Commission of Military History, which was presided over by General Ilie Ceaușescu, one of Nicolae Ceaușescu’s brothers. Although references to the Thracians became instrumental in establishing Romanians’ ancient roots, Geto-Dacians and, more importantly, Dacian-Romans were referred to as the “legitimate forefathers” of the Romanians. A historian, who was close to the Romanian Communist Party (RCP), wrote the following in 1983:

The complex process of organic blending of the two cultures and civilizations, of ethnical and linguistic osmosis between the Dacians and the Romans, inaugurated, with the end of the Dacian wars, a decisive stage which would result in the coming into being of a new people, the legitimate successor to its ancestors: the Romanian people.³

While General Ilie Ceaușescu wrote:

Documents and sources of all kinds and historical deeds also attest to the fact that the Geto-Dacians – the *legitimate forefathers* of the Romanian people – lived in the Carpatho-Danubian-Pontic area from times of yore, that they *did not come here from some other places*.... The Geto-Dacians, *direct forefathers of our people*, were attested in document for the first time as early as 2,500 years ago.... Components of one and the same people, speaking the same language, living in the same territory, having the same civilization, the Geto-Dacians were called in ancient writings either the Getae (in Greek sources) or the Dacians (in Latin sources) [my emphasis].⁴

As to the Romanian nation, a majority of the historians and social scientists have placed the moment of its formation somewhere between the 1848 Revolution and the 1918 creation of Greater Romania. For example, in a work published in 1967, the historian Ștefan Pascu argues that it was the “revolutionary struggle” during the 1848 Revolution that concluded the process of formation of the modern Romanian nation.⁵ Nevertheless, as Irina Livezeanu puts it in her work on interwar Romania, “the unification of Romanian lands in 1918 constituted a national revolution ... and this revolution initiated the turbulent nation building and civil strife that characterized the decades between the two wars.” Furthermore, the same author observed, “the union of 1918 brought into being a deeply fragmented polity, and the startling effects of centuries of political separation presented great challenges to the newly enlarged state and the sense of national identity of its population.”⁶ Similarly, Jowitt has argued that during the interwar period “the elites and major sectors of the population lacked meaningful, shared sentiments of community and a relatively consistent, jointly shaped set of commitments to the nation state itself.”⁷

This paper argues that the nation-building process in Romania was continued under communism. This particular element of Romania’s recent history made the elites and masses alike perceive the Romanian nation-state as being still “unrealized” and continuously threatened by some of its neighbors, especially Hungary and the Soviet Union. As Rogers Brubaker argues, this tendency to view the nation-state as “unrealized” imposes the adoption of a dynamic political stance. Since the state was perceived as being not yet national in its entirety, it was therefore imperative to be “nationalizing”:

Characteristic of this stance, or set of stances, is the tendency to see the state as an “unrealized” nation-state, as a state destined to become a

nation-state, the state of and for a particular nation, but not yet in fact a nation-state (at least not to a sufficient degree); and the concomitant disposition is to remedy this perceived defect, to make the state what it is properly and legitimately destined to be, by promoting language, culture, demographic position, economic flourishing, or political hegemony of the nominally state-bearing nation.⁸

Due to a combination of economic, social and cultural factors, a decisive stage in creating the Romanian nation was achieved in the early 1980s.⁹ It is this author's opinion that communist Romania went through a piecemeal process of "ethnic bureaucratic incorporation", to use Anthony D. Smith's term, based on three main components – (1) *elite manipulation*; (2) *cultural reproduction*; and (3) *modernization conducted from above* – that entered its final stage only in the early 1980s.

How the Romanian communist elite conceptualized the process of formation of Romanian national identity is, however, another matter. Still, the vigorous revival of national ideology after the withdrawal of Soviet troops in July 1958 poses difficult questions of interpretation with regard to the internationalist phase of Romanian Stalinism under the first supreme leader of communist Romania, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1948-1965). As for Gheorghiu-Dej's successor, Nicolae Ceaușescu (1965-1989), it can be inferred from his many speeches that the supreme leader of Romanian communists believed that the process of formation of the Romanian nation had come to an end with the creation of Greater Romania in 1918:

The establishment of the [Romanian] unitary national state six and a half decades ago represents an astounding historic victory for the long heroic struggle of the masses *to create the Romanian nation* and marks the realization of the age-old dream of all Romanians to live in unity within the borders of the same country, in one free and independent state [my emphasis].¹⁰

Consequently, after coming to power in 1965, Ceaușescu was convinced that he was creating the Romanian "socialist nation." It is nonetheless difficult to grasp from Ceaușescu's speeches what exactly a "socialist nation" meant to him. Analysis of his policies towards minorities reveals that he envisaged an ethnically homogenous Romanian "socialist nation." In terms of the official stance towards the idea of a "socialist" Romanian

nation, however, things were much clearer and were focused on the concept of a political nation. For example, in 1976, in his introduction to a volume dedicated to the history of the Hungarian minority in Romania, the historian Lajos Demény argues that Ceaușescu's idea of "socialist nation" was close to the idea of a political nation.¹¹ At the same time, however, we should bear in mind that Demény's interpretation was intended to provide a "human face" to the regime's assimilationist policies. In reality, the strategy of the RCP in dealing with ethnic minorities was based on the idea that communist egalitarian policies would lead to the disappearance of ethnic identities.

As already mentioned, it is this author's opinion that the process of creating the modern Romanian nation entered its final stage under the Ceaușescu regime. This aspect is also of prime importance in explaining why intellectual dissidence in communist Romania developed only with much difficulty and only after the economic crisis had become evident. As a legacy of the interwar cultural debates, national ideology remained a powerful issue, and the ideas, attitudes, and arguments associated with it played a major role in cultural debates during the communist years, especially after 1958. The revival of this ideology in the late 1950s and early 1960s, after a period of quiescence (though not rejection), echoed in the hearts and minds of the more talented Romanian intellectuals. In Romania, to use George Schöpflin's inspired phrase, "a legitimating discourse, that of ethnicity" was not only a constant of the country's political culture, but also a determinant in creating a focus of identification with, and loyalty towards, the regime.¹² This situation, until the early 1980s, served to dampen the appeal of dissident ideas to a larger public who saw in the regime a defender of their country's independence and territorial integrity. It should be added here that history – a subjective interpretation of "national" history – played a major role in this legitimating discourse. Thus, in communist Romania history mattered and was interpreted and re-interpreted according to the immediate goals of the communist ruling elite.

In order to support the argument of this paper some theoretical and methodological aspects need to be discussed. As Walker Connor argues, "nation-formation is a process, not an occurrence."¹³ In the case of Romania, this author argues, the process of turning peasants into Romanians, to paraphrase Eugen Weber, took a decisive course only under the national-communist regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu (1965-1989) in the context of an extensive program of centrally planned urbanization,

industrialization, increased communication and the spread of education. Furthermore, when analyzing the process of nation-building in Romania during the period 1945-1989, this author draws on the concepts of *organic* and *organized solidarity*, coined by the late Alexandru Duțu, an outstanding Romanian historian of mentalities.¹⁴ According to Duțu, *organic solidarity* is specific to the private sphere, which includes the family, parish, and voluntary associations and the like, while *organized solidarity* belongs to the public sphere and can be found throughout history, from the time of the elderly councils to the modern state. In cases of nation-building, such as that in Romania, the transformation from imperial province to national state took place primarily by relying on organized solidarity. It can be argued that organized solidarity, that is a sense of solidarity developed and continuously reinforced *from above* within the framework of the nation-state (through education, internal migration and common socialization in large state companies etc.), played a crucial role under communism and, ultimately, forged the Romanian nation. It should be emphasized that Duțu's interpretation perfectly complements Benedict Anderson's famous idea of the nation as an "imagined community."¹⁵ In this author's interpretation, Anderson's concept of "imagined community" describes mainly a process *from below*, while Duțu's concept of "organized solidarity," addresses a process initiated *from above*.

Indeed it is difficult, if not impossible, to provide a precise date for the creation of a nation.¹⁶ In Romania, as already noted, we are dealing with a *late creation of the nation*. Here, the notion of *creation* refers to a decisive shift in integrating large masses of the ethnic Romanian population into the "organized solidarity" and "imagined community" of the Romanian nation, and not to the final, ultimate realization of nationhood. Methodologically, the process of nation-building under communism will be analyzed below according to three major lines of inquiry: (1) *elite manipulation*; (2) *cultural reproduction*; and (3) *modernization conducted from above*.

Elite manipulation

The Romanian communist elite's relation to nationalism is an area that merits further investigation, all the more so since there has so far been no thorough investigation into the degree in which the exacerbated

nationalism of late *Ceaușescuism* originates from within the party elite. In other words, how much of Ceaușescu's nationalism was inspired by interwar trends (via recuperated intellectuals, for example) and how much came from his socialization with Gheorghiu-Dej's men?

In this respect, post-1989 testimonies of the former nomenklatura are not only telling, but also puzzling, since they reveal that the so-called internationalist phase of Romanian communism was less internationalist than was previously thought. For instance, controversy over contested territories, such as Transylvania, determined Romanian communists to look for arguments in the nationalist repertory even before they came to power in 1948. Gheorghe Apostol, arguably the most faithful of Gheorghiu-Dej's men, recalls a meeting with Stalin in December 1944 at which only he, Gheorghiu-Dej and Ana Pauker were present. The Romanian delegation based its plea for Transylvania by insisting on the history of the region, from the Roman conquest onwards. Clearly unimpressed with their historical arguments, Stalin decided that Transylvania should be awarded to Romania for their switching sides in August 1944. Apostol's story is significant because it emphasizes a major aspect of the Romanian communists' idea of nation. To Stalin they presented not the theses of the Fifth Party Congress, but the importance of the short-lived union of Transylvania with Moldavia and Wallachia under the medieval ruler, Mihai Viteazul, in 1600, on which they based their plea for the region. These accounts raise doubts as to the Romanian communists' supposed full commitment to the Cominternist theses of the Fifth Party Congress with regard to the multinational character of Greater Romania. Another high-ranking former communist official, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, who himself was not an ethnic Romanian, stresses that, with the exception of Ana Pauker and those who came from Moscow, he never heard a Romanian communist arguing that Bessarabia should be Soviet or that Transylvania be Hungarian.¹⁷

The problem of Bessarabia was clearly more delicate than that of Transylvania. Although clear references to Soviet-occupied Bessarabia could have damaged relations with the Soviet Union, recent testimonies in fact show the Romanian communist elite to have perceived that territory as being a part of a historic Romania. In this respect, the events surrounding the publication of Karl Marx's *Notes on the Romanians* are illustrative. Paul Niculescu-Mizil was at the time the head of the Propaganda Section of the Central Committee and therefore directly involved in the publication of Marx's work. Niculescu-Mizil has provided interesting information as

to the way in which a Polish historian discovered the manuscript in Amsterdam and how the news reached the Romanian authorities. He also speaks of the decision to translate the manuscript for the use of the party leadership and, finally, to publish it in 1964 through an elaborate critical apparatus that recommended the volume as a purely scholarly work.¹⁸

The importance of this here is that Marx's book handed the Romanian communists the opportunity to express what they could not express openly by using the authority of a "founding father": that the regime considered Bessarabia to be part of historical Romania. For example, Niculescu-Mizil recalls that his father, also a communist militant, also adopted a similar stance towards Bessarabia, confirming Maurer's assertion regarding the Romanian communists' views of the territories incorporated into Greater Romania after WWI.¹⁹ Thus, from 1964 onwards, Marx's words would be quoted imperiously whenever necessary to support the RCP's idea of national history. For example, two historians at the Party's service wrote the following in 1983:

Most clearly synthesizing and assessing the major moments of the history of the Romanian people, Marx stated his opinions on the question of the origin of the Romanian people, of the unity of territory and of the historical continuity of the Romanians in this territory. In his works, *he stressed the age of the Romanian people, its historical unity and continuity on the territory it had inhabited for millennia* [my emphasis].²⁰

Furthermore, it may be argued that *Party monolithism* and *self-assertiveness* are crucial concepts that offer a key to the political culture of Romanian communism. These features were shaped by the strategy of political survival based on independence from Moscow and extensive industrialization that was devised by Gheorghiu-Dej in the aftermath of the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The strategy was strictly adhered to by Ceaușescu. However, since a comprehensive discussion of the RCP industrialization policies under Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceaușescu would exceed the scope of this paper, we will instead focus on one important aspect of communist Romania's "independent path towards communism": the completion of the nation-building process.

As Ronald H. Linden correctly observed, "Romanian leaders have successfully capitalized upon the non-Slavic identity of the population."²¹

It was the policy of independence from Moscow – admittedly, combined with the slight improvement of living standards that began to show in the early 1960s – that echoed with the hearts and minds of the majority of the Romanian population. In August 1968, ten years after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania, Ceaușescu delivered his famous “balcony speech” in which he condemned the invasion of Czechoslovakia by WTO troops. From a historical perspective, it could be argued that the effect of Ceaușescu’s discourse on the Romanian population at large was enormous. For many Romanians his speech provided “proof” of his charismatic qualities.²² Simply put, this author believes that Ceaușescu’s “charismatic leadership” – to use Reinhard Bendix’s concept – occurred within the dramatic conditions of August 1968.²³ Paul Goma, for example, the initiator of the 1977 Goma movement and perhaps the most famous Romanian dissident, wrote of the mobilizing force of Ceaușescu’s August 1968 speech with the following words:

Ceaușescu’s discourse from the balcony... even now, in 1985, I cannot say that then he was “acting”, that he was insincere. In spite of the hysterical atmosphere, those of us who that August in 1968 had joined the Patriotic Guards did so neither for him, Ceaușescu, nor for the communist party... Not even for (socialist) Romania. Ceaușescu appealed not to communists, but to ... citizens, to defend – not the Party, but the country, by the power of arms.²⁴

Similarly, the critical intellectual writer Dumitru Țepeneag remembers how Ceaușescu’s speech had an instant effect on him: “For some days – he later confessed – I was a convinced *Ceaușeculist*.”²⁵ Without doubt, Ceaușescu’s charisma was for the most part simulated afterwards by official propaganda using co-opted intellectuals. Nevertheless, the origins of his “charismatic leadership” are to be found in the “late creation of the nation” or the new nation syndrome, as will be shown below and the fact that what was generally taken to be “proof” of his charismatic qualities was taken from the beginnings of his rule. It is useful to remember that Ceaușescu came to power in March 1965 and delivered his most famous speech on 21 August 1968. At the same time, as Max Weber puts it, if a charismatic leader “is unsuccessful for a long time, above all if his leadership fails to benefit his followers, it is likely that his charismatic authority will disappear.”²⁶ Nonetheless, it took more than ten years for Ceaușescu’s charismatic authority to be eroded.

After that moment in August 1968, much stronger emphasis was placed on the country's ancestors' struggle for independence and their heroic deeds. The equation was quite simple: in the past Romanians had to fight the Ottomans, under Ceaușescu they needed to oppose the Soviets (more obliquely, there were also some references to the alleged irredentist stance of Hungary). As Schöpflin aptly puts it:

Mythic and symbolic discourses can thus be employed to assert legitimacy and strengthen authority. They mobilize emotions and enthusiasm. They are a primary means by which people make sense of the political process, which is understood in a symbolic form.²⁷

In Ceaușescu's Romania, the resort to historical myth came almost naturally. From the very beginnings of his rule, Ceaușescu displayed an interest in and appreciation for the heroic deeds of the medieval rulers of the Romanian principalities. Ceaușescu's style of leadership – contrary to the leadership style of his predecessor, Gheorghiu-Dej – was based on a systematic itinerary of domestic visits, which regularly included the most significant monuments and historic sites of the given area.²⁸ Moreover, in the aftermath of the Soviet-led Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) invasion of Czechoslovakia, Ceaușescu began what can be termed the "itineraries of national cohesion", which were meant to provide popular backing to the independent policy of the RCP. Let us follow in detail the unfolding of events. On 21 August 1968 Ceaușescu delivered the "balcony speech" condemning the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the troops of five "fraternal" countries" – the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria. The next day, 22 August 1968, the Romanian Grand National Assembly (GNA) was convoked for an extraordinary session. In his speech to the GNA Ceaușescu stated that: "In our opinion, a big and tragic mistake, with heavy consequences for the fate of the unity of the socialist system and the international communist and workers' movement, has occurred."²⁹ Two days later, on 24 August, Ceaușescu held talks with the Yugoslav leader, Iosip Broz Tito (Ceaușescu had already visited Yugoslavia during the period 27 May-1 June of that year).³⁰

Then, on 26 August 1968, the supreme leader of Romanian communists began a comprehensive program of domestic visits. What is important here for this paper is the choice of Transylvania as the prime target of the regime's propagandist efforts. During a single day, 26 August 1968,

Ceaușescu managed to visit three different counties – Brașov, Harghita and Covasna – and participated in no less than four mass meetings in the towns of Brașov, Sfântu Gheorghe, Miercurea Ciuc and Odorheiul Secuiesc. It is important to note that in the counties of Harghita and Covasna the majority of the population is and was ethnic Hungarian. Having learnt the lesson of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, it appears Ceaușescu feared that the WTO invasion of Czechoslovakia would provoke unrest among the Hungarian-speaking population of Romania. This is quite possibly true, since, at the mass rallies held in the towns of Sfântu Gheorghe, Miercurea Ciuc and Odorheiul Secuiesc, he ended his speeches by saying a few words in Hungarian. Indeed it was the only occasion when Ceaușescu attempted to speak in the Hungarian language.³¹

With regard to the revival of historical myths in order to create popular support for the RCP's policies, one particular mass rally was of paramount importance: the rally of 30 August 1968 in the Transylvanian city of Cluj. On that day, Ceaușescu delivered a flamboyant speech in front of a large audience. He referred for the first time to the RCP as the direct successor of the heroic deeds of the Romanian medieval rulers, such as Ștefan cel Mare (Stephen the Great), Mircea cel Bătrîn (Mircea the Old), and Mihai Viteazul (Michael the Brave).³² From that moment on, the cult of ancestors and the manipulation of national symbols became the main ingredients of Ceaușescuism. It should be stressed that Ceaușescu made a considerable effort to attract Romania's national minorities and convince them that the RCP minority policy did not envision their assimilation. In this respect, it is revealing that a new series of domestic visits was scheduled for the period 20-21 September 1968 in another ethnically mixed region of Romania, the Banat. On that occasion, Ceaușescu again visited three counties – Caraș-Severin, Timiș and Arad – and delivered speeches at mass rallies in the cities of Reșița, Timișoara and Arad.³³

Ceaușescu's posture of defiance towards the 1968 Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia misled statesmen, politicians and scholars alike. As a keen observer of Romanian politics and society, Jowitt has defined Ceaușescu's stance as characteristic of a "romantic (liberal) nationalism:"

Under Ceaușescu, the nationalism of the Romanian regime, at least through the summer of 1969, has been what Carlton Hayes has termed romantic (liberal) nationalism. There are a number of indices one can use to justify this characterization: (a) the presence or absence of an Adam Smith sort of

definition of world harmony; (b) an emphasis on the value of sovereignty, that is, national independence; (c) identification with 'oppressed' nations; (d) an emphasis on the past which focuses on events and continuity rather than on a golden age or myth era; and (e) a view of nations as the natural divisions of humanity.³⁴

In reality, Ceaușescu's vision of national identity had nothing to do with romantic nationalism. He was aiming, as far as the Romanian majority was concerned, at a radical reinforcement of ethnic ties, a stance made clear by the launch of the so-called "Theses of July 1971". The "theses" – a rather brief document structured into seventeen points – embodied Ceaușescu's rigid attitude towards education and cultural production. Ceaușescu then reiterated the main ideas of the document, which was issued on 6 July 1971, at a meeting of Party activists involved in propaganda and indoctrination held on 9 July 1971. The "Theses of July 1971" were a radical attack on the cosmopolitan and "decadent", pro-Western attitudes in Romanian culture.³⁵ Equally, they signaled a return to cultural autochthonism. Furthermore, after the launch of the "theses", the regime began to place stronger emphasis on the importance of history writing in the building of the "socialist" nation, with the most important step being to provide the party guidelines for the writing of a "national" history. Three years later, in 1974, the founding document of Romanian national-communism was issued: the Romanian Communist Party Program (RCP).³⁶ This official document opened with a concise 38-page history of Romania, which became not only the blueprint for a single, compulsory textbook that was utilized in every school, but also the model for all historical writing to be published in Romania. It was based on four conceptual "pillars": (1) the ancient roots of the Romanian people; (2) the continuity of the Romanians on their territory from ancient times until present; (3) the unity of the Romanian people throughout its entire history; and (4) Romanians' continuous struggle for independence. (A discussion of the effects of the RCP on history writing and teaching is provided below in the section on cultural reproduction).

When a high-ranking Romanian party official exclaimed while in discussion with a foreign diplomat that "Independence is our legitimacy!" he really meant it.³⁷ It can be argued that in Romania, up until the mid 1980s, the nationalistic hatred of the Russians (and subsequently, the Soviets) acted in favor of the regime. At mass level, one of the lessons taught by national history was that nothing good ever came from the

East. For its part, the regime was prepared to nurture and exploit Romanians' Russophobia, which, as Hugh Seton-Watson put it, "is second only to that of the Poles."³⁸ This it skillfully did until the mid 1980s.

There was, however, something that the regime could not foresee: the coming to power of Mikhail Gorbachev. After 1985, at a time of structural economic and moral crisis in Ceaușescuism, the launch of Gorbachev's domestic *perestroika* led to the emergence of a totally different image of the Soviet Union and its leadership. "Gorbimania" began to spread among a Romanian population exasperated by the economic crisis and the orthodox vision of socialism being propagated by the "Genius of the Carpathians." When Gorbachev paid an official visit to Romania (25-27 May 1987), many Romanians hoped, in vain, that he would persuade Ceaușescu to introduce measures of economic reforms. The result, nonetheless, was that Romanians no longer saw the Soviet Union as a real threat to Romania's sovereignty; they were, in fact, looking to Moscow to free them from the domestic tyranny of the Ceaușescu clan. People were eager to learn more of Gorbachev's reforms. Pamphlets and brochures in Romanian published in the Soviet Union by the Novosti Press Agency circulated, especially in Bucharest, as if they were dissident writings. In 1988-1989, the people read avidly any such Soviet brochures with titles containing subversive words and syntagms such as: "restructuring", "renewal", "innovative", and "a new vision".³⁹ In terms of nationalist propaganda, therefore, the key argument of the RCP's legitimating discourse – independence from Moscow – vanished with the inception of Gorbachev's reforms.

As a consequence, the regime was left with only one target: the Hungarian minority. On 20 December 1989, Ceaușescu affirmed that the revolt in Timișoara, which sparked the Revolution, was the result of activity by "hooligan elements, working together with reactionary, imperialistic, irredentist, chauvinistic circles... aiming at the territorial dismemberment of Romania."⁴⁰ He was clearly hinting, among others, at neighboring Hungary and the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the new image of the Soviet Union among Romania's population deeply undermined the regime's propagandistic endeavors. By the late 1980s, independence from Moscow had ceased to be a major source of legitimacy for the communist regime in Romania. To paraphrase the high-ranking Romanian communist official quoted earlier, by the late 1980s, *independence* had ceased to be *their* legitimacy.

Cultural reproduction

The teaching of a “national” history and, respectively, geography, contributed decisively to the forging of the national identity in communist Romania. Similar strategies were also employed elsewhere, outside the communist world. For example, in his work on the modernization of rural France, Eugen Weber emphasizes the use of history teaching in the nation-building process.⁴¹ Nationalism is also place-bound. Consequently, in geography teaching, the presence of an identical map of the country in every classroom of every high school in Romania, contributed decisively to the process of “imagining” the nation. In this respect, as Cristina Petrescu has suggested, the generations raised under communism had a different perception of the national territory than the interwar generations. For them, Romanian national territory was imagined as comprising Transylvania, but not Bessarabia. The mental map they internalized was based on the political maps they saw continuously in the classroom. As a consequence, Bessarabia ceased to be perceived, on a mass level, as part of Romania’s historic territory and the process of imagining the Romanian nation during the communist period did not include that territory. At the same time, we should bare in mind that the RCP elite, as shown earlier, strove to keep alive the idea that Bessarabia was part of historical Romania. However, with Bessarabia, the process of cultural reproduction created a set of salient values that undermined the RCP’s ability to manipulate national symbols. Consequently, when Ceaușescu sought to win back popular support by raising the issue of Bessarabia in the late 1980s, he received very little popular backing. The precise moment when the issue of Bessarabia entered RCP discourse is still difficult to establish. Niculescu-Mizil argues that discussions with the Soviets were initiated in 1973-74 and continued in 1978, though it was at the Fourteenth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party that Ceaușescu called for the abrogation of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact.⁴²

History teaching was of even greater importance when it came to forging “organized solidarity”, as suggested by the centrality of the debates on the process of Romanian ethno-genesis. Communist historiography went through three stages between 1948 and 1989 in respect of this issue. In the first stage, 1948-1958, the Russification campaign meant that official historiography placed strong emphasis on the Slavs and their role in the formation of the Romanian people. The second stage, 1958-1974, was characterized by relative ideological relaxation and a return to the theses

of the interwar period which spoke of the role of the Romans and their intermixing with the local Dacian population in providing what was considered the Dacian-Romanian essence of the Romanians. The third stage, 1974-1989, was dominated by “Dacomania” – a special emphasis on the fundamental role of the “autochthonous”, Dacian element in the formation of Romanian people.⁴³ As shown above, the 1974 Program of the RCP imposed a blueprint for the writing and teaching of national history based on four conceptual “pillars”: the ancient roots of the Romanians, continuity, unity, and independence.

At the same time, it should be stressed that none of these four sacred themes of Romanian historiography was new. In fact, all these ideas had been present since the very institutionalization of history itself as a scientific discipline in Romania. The first two themes – ancient roots and the continuity of the Romanians – were developed as a result of the polemics with historians from neighboring countries, most notably Hungary towards the end of the 19th century. Moreover, since the processes of state-building and the professionalization of history as a discipline in its own right took place simultaneously in the second half of the 19th century, the third theme – the unity of the Romanian people – was always present in the historical writings of the period. Until the advent of Ceaușescuism, however, this issue never became an axiom. The fourth theme – the incessant struggle for independence – is a characteristic of all the historiographies of the smaller countries of Central and Eastern Europe that were continually confronted with more powerful neighboring empires. As Romania tried to emphasize its independence within the communist camp, the centrality of the struggle for independence in the national-communist historiographic canon was a natural reflection of daily politics. With historical studies, the real problem was that these four themes became the standard, a yardstick of historical interpretation. Consequently, one of the major lessons of national history, as taught until December 1989, was that the unitary Romanian nation-state had been continuously contested and threatened, and that it was the patriotic duty of all responsible Romanians to defend it at all costs. And, by depicting itself as the sole guarantor of Romania’s independence and national sovereignty (with one eye on the neighboring Soviet Union and Hungary), the Party won considerable popular backing.

The idea of a Romanian nation created around four conceptual “pillars” reached the grassroots level through schooling, the press, cinema, radio and television. It was further reinforced through the national festivals,

Cîntarea României and *Daciada*. This process in fact started well before 1974, and the year 1968 can be considered a turning point. It was not by chance that, in the aftermath of August 1968, one of the most powerful Romanian historical myths was revived: the myth of Michael the Brave and his unification of the Romanian principalities in 1600.⁴⁴

Michael the Brave was a medieval prince who for a number of months in 1600 managed to unite the principalities of Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania (the main historical provinces of present-day Romania) under one rule. The reign of Michael the Brave became the subject of one of the most successful films ever to be produced under communism: Sergiu Nicolaescu's mega-production, *Mihai Viteazul*. The film was made in 1969 and released in 1970. What is of interest here is the film's perfect embodiment of Ceaușescu's vision of "national" history in the light of the myths of continuity and unity of Romanians on the present-day territory of the country.⁴⁵ More importantly, rather than concentrating on Nicolaescu himself, I believe that most emphasis should be placed on the quality of the script and the personality of the scriptwriter, Titus Popovici, and his relationship with the communist establishment, not to mention those who acted as advisors on medieval history, Andrei Oțetea and Constantin C. Giurescu, who were the most representative historians of the period. Approached in this way, we can conclude that Nicolaescu himself was only responsible for delivering to the public what were the official ideas of national history dressed up in fancy clothes, which he did with tremendous success.

We can go further and argue that the film was instrumental in forging a national identity for a majority of today's Romanians, and there are at least two main elements that support this argument. Firstly, the movie was very well made, both technically and artistically. The main character, Michael the Brave, was played by one of the most gifted Romanian actors of the postwar period, Amza Pellea, and the team of supporting actors included the best actors Romania had to offer at that time. Secondly, the script was simple and direct: the story unfolded without complication and the message was designed to reach all kinds of audiences, from the most sophisticated to the most ignorant. Clearly, the story told in Nicolaescu's film followed the history books and emphasized the aforementioned "pillars" of "national" history. Since collective viewing by school children was compulsory, the message of the film was efficient in reaching the grassroots level and produced lasting effects.⁴⁶

After the launch of the 1974 Romanian Communist Party Program, the regime devised a national festival, *Cîntarea României* (Songs of Praise for Romania), which was first held in 1976 and continued to be held annually until 1989. A national sports competition called *Daciada*, in a clear reference to the Dacian origins of the Romanians, was also established, but was less influential in forging ethnic allegiance.⁴⁷ *Cîntarea României* became so important in forging the national identity of present-day Romanians due to having been devised as a kind of huge cultural-ideological umbrella under which all cultural activities in Romania after 1976 were to take place. In other words, everything that could be identified as a cultural event had to be part of the national festival and praise, one way or another, the nation and its supreme leader. The festival brought together professional artists and large numbers of amateur artists alike from all over the country. For amateur artists the festival represented first and foremost an opportunity to escape from the boredom of the workplace and spend some days out of the factory (and sometimes out of town).⁴⁸ The price they had to pay was to praise *Partidul, Ceaușescu, and România*, which many felt worth doing in the circumstances. Insidiously, however, through the verses that people recited and the songs they sang, a set of values and attitudes were being slowly inculcated. The result was that many acquired a subjective version of national history and came to believe that the Party's achievements really were a continuation of the heroic deeds of the medieval rulers. The magic of the 1968 "balcony speech" was clearly still powerful, and, to reiterate a point, it was only after 1981 that the economic crisis began to undermine the regime's attempts to indoctrinate the population. Moreover, both *Cîntarea României* and *Daciada* were national competitions, which thus contributed to reinforcing ethnic ties and allegiance.

This mixture of professionalism and amateurishness harmed not only the quality of the cultural products, but also made more space for those products that best served the communist propaganda machine. Initially, when glorifying the RCP and its supreme leader, the amateur artists overdid their compliments in order to achieve official recognition. Soon afterwards, the professional artists also began to see in the festival a means for upward mobility and the chance to earn some easy money and duly followed suit. As a consequence, up until the demise of the regime, many professional artists produced a continuous array of pretentious and bad taste artworks depicting the supreme leader and his wife. The 1980s, in particular, proved a fertile period for the production of this kind of

kitsch.⁴⁹ What interests us here, however, is that at grassroots level the festival was instrumental in praising Romanianness and the unity of the party-state. Thus, through cultural reproduction, the regime succeeded in enforcing upon ethnic Romanians a stronger sense of belonging to the organized solidarity of the Romanian nation.

In addition to *Cîntarea României*, another cultural “show” served, by rather simpler means, to support the regime’s identity politics: the *Flacăra* (Flame) Cenacle of Revolutionary Youth, which was led by the poet Adrian Păunescu. From 1973 until its demise in June 1985, the *Flacăra Cenacle* succeeded in “confiscating” the natural rebelliousness of the younger generations and transforming it or directing it for patriotic purposes. By channeling the energies of a generation, who as yet did not perceive the system as something entirely bad, the *Flacăra Cenacle* hampered the development of a true counterculture and thus contributed to the hampering of a dissident movement in Romania. By mixing rock music with poetry that praised the nation, the Party and its supreme leader, Păunescu’s cenacle reached the public that *Cîntarea României* could not: the young and potentially rebellious. The message of the *Flacăra Cenacle* was that communism could coexist with a sort of alternative culture. Young people were allowed to stay until the small hours of the day in stadiums throughout the country where they could sing, dance, smoke, consume alcohol, and make love. In many respects, the atmosphere in the stadiums was more pleasant than what the system could offer in terms of leisure opportunities, especially by the early 1980s. On 15 June 1985, however, the *Flacăra Cenacle* took place in a stadium in the city of Ploiești, some 50 kilometers north of Bucharest, when torrential rain caused chaos among the crowd and resulted in the death of five people and numerous injuries. As a consequence, the regime banned the *Flacăra Cenacle*,⁵⁰ but the damage had already been done. Politicized rock music did not appear in Romania, partly due to Păunescu’s festival. Admittedly, the rock-and-roll counterculture was also undermined by the economic crisis and the rationing of power consumption, as one Westerner ironically observed: “How could you expect rock and roll to survive in a country where there is barely enough electricity to power a light bulb, let alone drive an electric guitar?”⁵¹ However, the role of the *Flacăra Cenacle* in “confiscating” a major segment of the alternative culture that *Cîntarea României* was unable to reach and channel it into patriotic performances in accordance with the tenets of Ceaușescu’s July 1971 Theses must not be neglected.⁵²

The perverse effects of this policy were felt acutely after the collapse of communism. In the early 1990s, the issues of national identity and loyalty towards a “unitary nation-state” received disproportionate amounts of attention, and often overshadowed the issue of democratic transformation of the country. It was in part due to this approach to nationhood that Romania’s post-communist transformation has been longer and more traumatic than in most of the former communist countries of Central Europe.

Modernization conducted from above

Another issue that merits closer examination is related to modernization – more specifically, to economic development and social transformation under communism. According to the 1930 census, Romania’s rural population made up 78.9% of the total population, with the urban population representing the remaining 21.1%.⁵³ After the communists came to power, the rural population began decreasing and fell from 76.6% to 49.9% over the period 1948 to 1981, while the urban population increased from 23.4% to 50.1%.⁵⁴ The rapid industrialization of the country that took place at the same time resulted in a growth of the population working in industry and a significant decrease in those working in agriculture. Between 1950 and 1981, the population employed in agriculture decreased from 74.1% to 28.9%; conversely, over the same period, the population employed in industry increased from 12.0% to 36.1%. This process occurred in the context of socialist industrialization, that is, the concentration of large masses of workers in huge factories in close proximity to urban areas. This large shift in the rural-urban distribution of the population, combined with the rapid increase in the amount of the population involved in industry compared with agriculture, led to the exposure of large numbers of peasants to urban life and city culture. These masses went through a process of cognitive dissonance, being forced to change their behavior and, in the long term, their attitudes. This “organized” their sense of solidarity beyond the organic solidarity characteristic of a face-to-face society. The end result was their integration into the “imagined” community of the Romanian nation.

However, the integration of the rural regions could have not been achieved without a sustained program of economic development. As shown above, the development of a network of paved roads and, following

the Leninist principle, rural electrification, contributed heavily to forging the nation. Rural electrification was accompanied by the spread of cheap radio technologies that brought rural Romania out of its autarky. The spread of television in the late 1960s also had a decisive influence on the process of cultural integration. Interwar Romania's network of paved roads was deplorable. In 1956, after more than ten years of communist rule, paved roads still made up only 4.8 % of the total network of 76,000 km. By 1980 paved roads made up 20.0 % of the total. In terms of electrification, the situation was equally poor when the communists came to power: in 1945, only 535 villages from a total number of 15,000 were connected to the national grid; while in 1965 the number was 3,034, a number which had risen to 10,591 by 1970.⁵⁵

The spread of education, which is a crucial ingredient in the process of cultural reproduction, was directly linked to industrialization and urbanization. While the rate of illiteracy in interwar Romania substantially declined between 1918 and 1948, the vast majority of the population had still not attended more than four years of primary schooling. As mentioned earlier, the law in 1948 stated that of the seven years of available free education, only four were compulsory; by 1955/1956 seven years of schooling became compulsory in urban areas, followed by a similar provision in 1959/1960 for rural areas. In 1961/1962 compulsory education was extended to eight years. Though only 14% of pupils in 1938/1939 went beyond primary level, the implementation of communist educational policies meant that this percentage had increased to 59% by 1965/1966. The consequence was that successive generations were educated according to a unique national curriculum and fully achieved (especially by learning "national" history and geography, as already shown) a profound sense of national identity. A corollary of this, however, was that the Romanian nation was understood mainly in ethnic and not in civic terms.

Conclusions

In conclusion, apart from the modest economic boom of the 1960s and 1970s, the skilful manipulation of national ideology provided a strong and enduring focus of identification with, and loyalty towards, the communist regime. In this respect, the political culture of Romanian communism possessed in national ideology an enduring element of prime

symbolic importance. The “late creation of the nation” syndrome also provided unexpected support to the communist regime and hindered the development of an organized movement against the regime. It also acted as a hindrance towards the rapid democratization of the country after the 1989 revolution.

For example, if we compare the societal response to the territorial losses of Romania in the summer of 1940 to that of January-March 1990 based on the perceived threat of losing Transylvania, then the argument put forward in this section can be better understood. It can be argued that the conditions in 1940 were different from those at the beginning of 1990: in the summer of 1940, Europe was at war, Romania’s interwar system of alliances had been dissolved, and there was little room for maneuver. At the same time, however, we should not underestimate the gravity of the situation in Romania at the end of 1989 and beginning of 1990. If we look back at what was the only bloody revolution among the revolutions of Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 and the ensuing “power vacuum”, we soon notice that, *mutatis mutandis*, the conditions were in many respects comparable. Still, the important matter in this analysis is the societal reaction, which in post-1989 Romania was much stronger. When the leaders of the National Salvation Front claimed that the nation was in danger, there ensued an abundance of different forms of self-organization and protest from below. For example, the initial successes of the nationalist cultural association, *Vatra Românească* (Romanian Hearth), are impressive, given the speed at which it spread and established branches all over the country.

It is another matter altogether, however, as to whether the nation really was under threat. We can go further and enquire as to the true goals of *Vatra Românească* and why its influence had diminished drastically by the end of 1991, at the same time with the consolidation of political parties. Despite these questions, the crucial aspect was that many people were genuinely concerned with defending the integrity of their homeland, despite in some cases never having visited Transylvania, nonetheless responded to the cause of *Vatra Românească* and other similar associations. By contrast, during the same period (1990-1991), the question of Bessarabia failed to provoke a similar reaction. This leads us to conclude that the process of nation-building under communism had served to exclude Bessarabia from the mental maps of a majority of the population.

NOTES

- 1 ALMOND, Gabriel A., "Communism and Political Culture Theory," in idem, *A Discipline Divided: Schools and Sects in Political Science*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, Cal., 1990, p. 168.
- 2 The weakness of the socialist movement in Romania up until the communist take-over was determined, as Michael Shafir convincingly argues, by three main factors: (1) the socio-economic structure of economy, i.e. the "eminently agrarian" character of the country; (2) the "non-Romanian ethnic origin" of many socialist and communist leaders; and (3) the "disregard displayed by the Romanian Communist Party towards traditional national aspirations." See SHAFIR, Michael, *Romania – Politics, Economics and Society: Political Stagnation and Simulated Change*, Frances Pinter Publishers, London, 1985, p. 9. Hereafter quoted as *Romania – Politics, Economics and Society*.
- 3 See MUŞAT, Mircea, "The Same People, the Same Homeland and the Same History," in *Romania: Pages of History* (Bucharest) No.3, 1983, p. 5.
- 4 CEAUŞESCU, Ilie, "The Romanian people: Two millennia of historical existence in the Carpatho-Danubian-Pontic area," *The Entire People's Struggle*, Special Issue of the *Romanian Review of Military History* (Bucharest), n.d., pp. 11-12.
- 5 See PASCU, Ştefan, *Formarea naţiunii române* (Formation of the Romanian nation), Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, Bucharest, 1967, pp. 49-55.
- 6 LIVEZEANU, Irina, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1995, p. 7, 297.
- 7 JOWITT, Kenneth, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development: The Case of Romania, 1944-1965*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1971, pp. 89-90.
- 8 BRUBAKER, Rogers, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p. 63.
- 9 After 1981, to a certain extent the economic crisis and ideological decay undermined the regime's efforts to further homogenize the Romanian "socialist" nation. At the same time, the idea that various regional identities – Transylvanian, Wallachian, Moldavian – melted into a Romanian identity was also supported by the fact that the Romanian nation did not follow the fate of the "unrealized" Yugoslav or Czechoslovak nations after 1989.
- 10 CEAUŞESCU, Nicolae, "Speech at the festive meeting to celebrate 65 since the Union of Transylvania with Romania, held in Bucharest on 1 December 1983," in *Romania: Pages of History* (Bucharest) No.1, 1984, p. 3.
- 11 DEMÉNY, Lajos, "Introduction" to *Studii de Istorie a naţionalităţilor conlocuitoare din România şi a înfrăţirii lor cu naţiunea română: Naţionalitatea maghiară* (Studies in the history of the co-inhabiting nationalities in Romania and their fraternization with the Romanian nation: The Hungarian nationality)

- Vol. I, Editura Politică, Bucharest, 1976, pp.5-6. For the Saxon minority in Romania see *Studii de Istorie a naționalităților conlocuitoare din România și a înfrățirii lor cu națiunea română: Naționalitatea germană* (Studies in the history of the co-inhabiting nationalities in Romania and their fraternization with the Romanian nation: The German nationality) Vol. I, Editura Politică, Bucharest, 1976.
- ¹² SCHÖPFLIN, George, *Nations, Identity, Power: The New Politics of Europe*, Hurst, London, 2000, p. 64. Hereafter quoted as *Nations, Identity, Power*.
- ¹³ CONNOR, Walker, *Etnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994, p. 223.
- ¹⁴ For the idea of “organized solidarities” see DUȚU, Alexandru, “Europa noastră’ gîndită și trăită” (“Our Europe” Ruminated and Lived), in idem, *Ideea de Europa și evoluția conștiinței europene* (The idea of Europe and the evolution of European consciousness), Editura All, Bucharest, 1999, pp.9-12.
- ¹⁵ According to Benedict Anderson, a nation is “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” See ANDERSON, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1991, p. 6.
- ¹⁶ Connor, for example, states that “the point in the process at which a sufficient proportion of people has internalized national identity allowing nationalism to become an effective force for mobilizing the masses does not lend itself to precise calculation.” See CONNOR, *Etnonationalism*, pp. 223-224.
- ¹⁷ For Apostol’s story see BETEA, Lavinia, *Maurer și lumea de ieri: Mărturii despre stalinizarea României* (Maurer and the yesterday world: Testimonies on Romania’s Stalinization), Editura Ioan Slavici, Arad, 1995, p.260; for Maurer’s affirmation, see *ibid.*, p. 147.
- ¹⁸ See MARX, Karl, *Însemnari despre români: Manuscrise inedite* (Notes on Romanians: Unedited manuscripts), Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Române, Bucharest, 1964.
- ¹⁹ For more on the publication of Marx’s manuscript see NICULESCU-MIZIL, Paul, *O istorie trăită* (A lived history), Editura Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 1997, pp. 251-93.
- ²⁰ See MICU, Bucur Ioan, and GHEORGHE, Constantin, “The History of the Romanians in the Oeuvre of Karl Marx,” in *Romania: Pages of History* (Bucharest) No.3, 1983, pp. 52-53.
- ²¹ LINDEN, Ronald H., “Romanian Foreign Policy in the 1980s,” in NELSON, Daniel, ed., *Romania in the 1980s*, Westview Press, Boulder, Col., 1981, p. 229.
- ²² According to Max Weber, charisma is “a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.” Quoted in BENDIX, Reinhard, “Reflections

on Charismatic Leadership,” in BENDIX, Reinhard et. al., eds., *State and Society: A Reader in Comparative Sociology*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973, p.619. Ceaușescu’s speech of 21 August 1968 was published by the Party’s daily *Scînteia*, No. 7802, Thursday, 22 August 1968, p. 1. The speech was also published in CEAUȘESCU, Nicolae, *România pe drumul desăvîșirii construcției socialiste: Rapoarte, cuvîntări, articole, ianuarie 1968 – martie 1969* (Romania on the road to accomplishing socialist construction: Reports, speeches, articles, January 1968 – March 1969, Editura Politică, Bucharest, 1969, pp.415-418. Hereafter quoted as *Romania on the road to accomplishing the socialist construction, January 1968 – March 1969*.

23 For more on this see BENDIX, Reinhard, “Reflections on Charismatic Leadership,” in BENDIX, Reinhard et. al., eds., *State and Society: A Reader in Comparative Sociology*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973, pp. 616-29.

24 GOMA, Paul, *Amnezia la români* (Amnezia to Romanians), Editura Litera, Bucharest, 1992, p.54.

25 ȚEPENEAG, Dumitru, *Reîntoarcerea fiului la sânul mamei răătăcite* (The return of the son to prodigal mother’s breast), Institutul European, Iași, 1993, p. 95.

26 Quoted in BENDIX, “Reflections on Charismatic Leadership,” p. 620.

27 SCHÖPFLIN, *Nations, Identity, Power*, p. 89.

28 During the period of consolidation of Ceaușescu’s personal power (1965-1969), the purpose of such visits was to create the image of a popular leader always ready to consult with the people, especially the workers and peasants. For more on this see PETRESCU, Cristina, “A Ritual of the ‘Golden Epoch’: Ceaușescu’s Domestic Visits”, in BOIA, Lucian, ed., *The Myths of Romanian Communism*, Vol. II, Bucharest University Press, Bucharest, 1997, pp.107-109. In Poland, Edward Gierek followed a similar strategy after his coming to power in the early 1970s. The leader of the Polish communists, as Kennedy observes, “tried to re-secure the party’s working-class roots through ‘consultations’”. For instance, in 1971 alone, Gierek held 171 “grass-roots meetings.” See KENNEDY, Michael D., *Professionals, Power and Solidarity in Poland: A Critical Sociology of Soviet-Type Society*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, p.39. For his part, Michael Bernhard estimates that Gierek held 187 such meetings in 1971. See BERNHARD, Michael H., *The Origins of Democratization in Poland: Workers, Intellectuals, and Oppositional Politics, 1976-1980*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993, p. 42.

29 The same day, the GNA adopted a document, the importance of which was equalled only by that of the “Declaration of April 1964:” *Declarația Marii Adunări Naționale a R.S.R. cu privire la principiile de bază ale politicii externe a României* (Declaration of the Grand National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Romania regarding the fundamental principles of Romania’s

- foreign policy). See *Principiile de bază ale politicii externe a României* (The fundamental principles of Romania's foreign policy), Editura Politică, Bucharest, 1968. The fragment from Ceaușescu's speech is on p. 21.
- 30 CONSTANTINIU, Florin, *O istorie sinceră a poporului român* (A sincere history of the Romanian people), Editura Univers Enciclopedic, Bucharest, 1997, pp. 509-510.
- 31 CEAUȘESCU, Nicolae, *Cuvîntare la mitingul din municipiul Brașov - 26 august 1968* (Speech at the mass rally in the city of Brașov – 26 August 1968), in CEAUȘESCU, Nicolae, *Romania on the road to accomplishing the socialist construction, January 1968 – March 1969*, pp. 422-30; idem, *Cuvîntare la mitingul din orașul Sfîntu Gheorghe – 26 august 1968* (Speech at the mass rally in the town of Sfîntu Gheorghe – 26 August 1968), pp. 431-38; idem, *Cuvîntare la mitingul din orașul Miercurea Ciuc – 26 august 1968* (Speech at the mass rally in the town of Miercurea Ciuc – 26 August 1968), pp.439-48; idem, *Cuvîntare la mitingul din municipiul Odorheiu Secuiesc – 26 august 1968* (Speech at the mass rally in the town of Odorheiu Secuiesc – 26 August 1968), pp. 449-54.
- 32 CEAUȘESCU, Nicolae, *Cuvîntare la marea adunare populară din municipiul Cluj-30 august 1968* (Speech at the mass rally in the city of Cluj – 30 August 1968), in *Romania on the road to accomplishing the socialist construction, January 1968 – March 1969*, p. 478.
- 33 CEAUȘESCU, Nicolae, *Cuvîntare la mitingul de la Reșița – 20 septembrie 1968* (Speech at the mass rally in the city of Reșița), in CEAUȘESCU, Nicolae, *Romania on the road to accomplishing the socialist construction, January 1968 – March 1969*, pp.506-516; idem, *Cuvîntare la mitingul de la Timișoara – 20 septembrie 1968* (Speech at the mass rally in the city of Timișoara – 20 September 1968), *ibid.*, pp.517-21; idem, *Cuvîntare la mitingul de la Arad – 21 septembrie 1968* (Speech at the mass rally in the city of Arad – 21 September 1968), *ibid.*, pp. 521-31.
- 34 JOWITT, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and national Development*, p. 286.
- 35 See CEAUȘESCU, Nicolae, *Propuneri de măsuri pentru îmbunătățirea activității politico-ideologice, de educare marxist-leninistă a membrilor de partid, a tuturor oamenilor muncii – 6 iulie 1971* (Proposal of measures aimed at enhancing the political-ideological activity, the Marxist-Leninist education of Party members and the entire working people – 6 July 1971) and *Expunere la Consfățuirea de lucru a activului de partid din domeniul ideologiei și al activității politice și cultural-educative – 9 iulie 1971* (Exposé at the Meeting of the Party activists in the field of ideology and political and cultural-educational activity – 9 July 1971), Editura Politică, Bucharest, 1971. For more on this see PETRESCU, Cristina and PETRESCU, Dragoș, “Restalinizarea vieții culturale românești: Tezele din iulie 1971” (The Restalinization of the Romanian Cultural Life: Nicolae Ceaușescu's Theses of July 1971), *Arhiva Cotidianului* (Bucharest), 25 October 1996, pp. 1-3.

- ³⁶ See *Programul Partidului Comunist Român de făurire a societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate și înaintare a României spre comunism* (The Romanian Communist Party Program for establishing a multilaterally developed socialist society and Romania's advancement towards communism), Editura Politică, Bucharest, 1975. Regarding the teleological approach to the "national" history, see pp.27-64.
- ³⁷ Quoted in BOTEZ, Mihai, *Românii despre ei înșiși* (Romanians about themselves), Editura Litera, Bucharest, 1992, p. 33.
- ³⁸ Cited in VUCINICH, Wayne S., "Major Trends in Eastern Europe," in FISCHER-GALATI, Stephen, ed., *Eastern Europe in the 1980s*, Westview Press, Boulder, Col., 1981, p. 9.
- ³⁹ See for instance: *Conferința a XIX-a a P.C.U.S.: O nouă viziune, hotărâri cu caracter novator* (The 19th conference of the CPSU: A new vision, innovative decisions), Novosti Press Agency, Moscow, 1988; *Cea de-a XIX-a conferință a P.C.U.S.: Documente și materiale—Raportul prezentat de Mihail Gorbaciov, secretar general al C.C. al P.C.U.S.* (The 19th conference of the CPSU: Documents and materials – the report presented by Mikhail Gorbachev, general secretary of the CPSU), Novosti Press Agency, Moscow, 1988; *Congresul deputaților poporului din U.R.S.S.: Raportul prezentat de Mihail Gorbaciov, Moscova, Kremlin, 30 mai 1989* (People's Deputies Congress: The report presented by Mikhail Gorbachev, Moscow, Kremlin, 30 May 1989), Novosti Press Agency, Moscow, 1989; Nikolai Șmeliiov, *Restructurarea așa cum o vede un economist* (Restructuring as seen by an economist), Novosti Press Agency, Moscow, 1989; and *Restructurarea: Probleme, Studii, Prognoze – Potențialul spiritual al înnoirii* (Restructuring: Problems, Studies, Prognoses – The spiritual potential of renewal, Novosti Press Agency, Moscow, 1989.
- ⁴⁰ See the text of Ceaușescu's televised evening discourse of 20 December 1989 in PERVA, Aurel and ROMAN, Carol, *Misterele revoluției române: Revenire după ani* (The mysteries of the Romanian revolution: A return after many years), Editura Carro, Bucharest, 1991, pp. 38-39.
- ⁴¹ As Eugen Weber puts it, "there were no better instruments of indoctrination and patriotic conditioning than French history and geography, especially history." See WEBER, Eugen, *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1976, pp.333-334.
- ⁴² See NICULESCU-MIZIL, Paul, *De la Comintern la comunism național* (From Comintern to National-Communism), Evenimentul Românesc, Bucharest, 2001, pp. 448-49.
- ⁴³ Regarding Romanian historiography and its relation to politics between 1944 and 1977, see GEORGESCU, Vlad, *Politică și istorie: Cazul comuniștilor români, 1944-1977* (Politics and history: The case of Romanian communists, 1944-1977), Editura Humanitas, Bucharest, 1991. Hereafter quoted as *Politics and history*.

- 44 Michael the Brave was born in 1558 and came to the throne of Wallachia in September 1593. After the battle of Șelimbăr (18/28 October 1599), he occupied Transylvania and became the Habsburg governor of the province (while also ruling over Wallachia). On 6/16 May 1600 Michael the Brave's troops entered and occupied Moldavia. During the months of June, July and August 1600 he was at the height of his powers, ruling over the three principalities inhabited by Romanian-speaking populations: Wallachia, Transylvania and Moldavia. In September 1600, however, after the battle of Mirăslău (8/18 September), Michael was forced to renounce the throne. He returned, however, to Transylvania with the military support of Emperor Rudolph II in July 1601, but was assassinated on 9/19 August 1601 on the orders of the Habsburg General Giorgio Basta. For a classic interpretation of the reign of Michael the Brave see GIURESCU, Constantin C., and GIURESCU, Dinu C., *Istoria Românilor* (History of Romanians) Vol.2, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 1976, pp. 324-80.
- 45 After 1989, Nicolaescu's films were released on videocassette and, quite surprisingly, were once again successful. A short interview with Nicolaescu introduces each film. The more attentive viewer will grasp immediately from these interviews that the director was more interested in the technical aspects of film-making than in the national-communist ideas of history epitomized in his films. The interview for his film *Mihai Viteazul* (Michael the Brave) and its less flamboyant sequel *Nemuritorii* (The Immortals), as well the thrillers *Un comisar acuză* (A police inspector accuses) and *Revanșa* (The Revanche), which takes place during the war years, 1940-1941, support this view.
- 46 For the post-1989 VHS/PAL version of *Mihai Viteazul*, remastered in Dolby Surround sound, see NICOLAESCU, Sergiu, *Mihai Viteazul: Ultima Cruciadă* (Michael the Brave: The Last Crusade), 203 min, distributed in Romania by Transglobal Media SRL.
- 47 For the first *Cântarea României* (1976/1977) festival, see PETRESCU, Dragoș, "Cântarea României sau stalinismul național în festival" (Songs of Praise to Romania or national-Stalinism in festival), in BOIA, Lucian, ed., *Miturile comunismului românesc* (Myths of Romanian communism), Editura Nemira, Bucharest, 1998, pp. 239-51. For more on the national sport competition *Daciada* see GEORGESCU, *Politics and history*, pp. 124-25.
- 48 This assertion is also supported through the direct observation of the author while working as an engineer at the Romlux Tîrgoviște Electric Bulb Factory during the period 1987-1989.
- 49 See, for example, the painters Constantin Piliuță and Sabin Bălașa or the poets Corneliu Vadim Tudor and Adrian Păunescu. The list of professional artists, not to mention the large numbers of amateur artists, who produced these kinds of "works of art" is, however, much longer. See for instance the numerous paintings dedicated to the Ceaușescu couple by both professional and amateur artists and reproduced in the *Lucefărul Almanac 1988*

- (Bucharest), pp. 1-13, and the *Scînteia Almanac 1987* (Bucharest), pp.25-31. For figures relating to the artistic production, see STOIAN, Nicolae, "Cîntarea României – Un festival-epopee" (Songs of Praise to Romania: A festival epopee), in *Flacăra Almanac 1978* (Bucharest), pp.32-36 and POPESCU-BOGDĂNEȘTI, N., "Cîntarea României: O constelație a talentelor poporului" (Songs of Praise to Romania: A constellation of people's talents), in *Scînteia Almanac 1978* (Bucharest), pp.129-36. For poetry, a good introduction to the productions by court poets is given by NEGRICI, Eugen, *Poezia unei religii politice: Patru decenii de agitație și propagandă* (The poetry of a political religion: Four decades of agitation and propaganda), Editura Pro, Bucharest, n.d., esp. pp. 311-49.
- 50 On the Ploiești event see GIURESCU, Dinu C., ed., *Istoria României în date* (Romania's history in data), Editura Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 2003, p. 719.
- 51 Quoted in RAMET, Sabrina P., *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: The Sources and Meaning of the Great Transformation*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1991, p. 234.
- 52 In fact, the *Flacăra Cenacle* won the first prize for "artistic and cultural-educational activity" at the inaugural (1976-1977) edition of the national festival *Cîntarea României*.
- 53 MADGEARU, Virgil N., *Evoluția economiei românești după războiul mondial* (The evolution of the Romanian economy after the War), Independența Economică, Bucharest, 1940; reprint, Editura Științifică, Bucharest, 1995, p. 23.
- 54 SHAFIR, *Romania – Politics, Economics and Society*, p. 47.
- 55 RONNĂS, Per, *Urbanization in Romania: A Geography of Social and Economic Change since Independence*, The Economic Research Institute, Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm, 1984, p. 246.

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